

Prepared Testimony by

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to the

**House Committee on International Relations
Subject: The U.S.-India 'Global Partnership': How Significant for American
Interests?**

November 16, 2005

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for your invitation to testify on the transforming U.S.-Indian relationship and its significance for the United States. Although there are many dimensions to this subject, I will resist the temptation of covering these exhaustively, in part because I have already done so in my monograph, *India as a Major Global Power: An Action Agenda for the United States*, published this spring by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.* Instead, I will focus my written testimony, as requested by the Chairman in his letter of invitation, mainly on my judgment about “the importance of India relative to the geopolitical challenges likely to confront the United States in the twenty-first century” and “the opportunities and challenges attendant to the development of meaningful strategic coordination between Washington and Delhi.” I respectfully request that my statement be entered into the record.

As I noted in my appearance before the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee on June 14, 2005, the United States and India today are happily confronted by an unprecedented convergence of interests, values, and inter-societal ties in a way never experienced before in the close to sixty-year history of the bilateral relationship. Throughout the Cold War, the United States and India shared common values—primarily our belief in liberal democracy—but were divided by many differences in interests. The historical record shows that these common values were critical to preventing our two countries from becoming real antagonists, but that they could not prevent the emergence of political estrangement arising from various divergences in interests.

Since the mid-1960s, the ties between our two societies have been progressively strengthened by the presence of a new generation of Indian immigrants to the United States who, having brought from their native country a strong conviction about the importance of family, education, and achievement, have contributed immeasurably to our country’s economic growth, social diversity and, ultimately, its national power. The success of Indian-Americans has, in turn, had the profound effect of changing Indian attitudes towards the United States. The latest survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, has confirmed that of all the fifteen countries surveyed for the 2005 dataset, the image of the United States is strongest in India: Fully 71% in India have expressed a positive opinion of the United States, compared with some 54% three years ago. Also of interest is the fact that 63% of the Indian respondents believed that U.S. foreign policy is concerned about others, compared with only 26% who rejected such a claim—the highest result among respondents polled in a foreign nation. Such perceptions have been progressively strengthened over the years by growing U.S.-Indian economic and trade linkages, the new presence of Americans of Indian origin in U.S. political life, and the vibrant exchange of ideas and culture through movies, literature, food, and travel.

However, it was only the ending of the Cold War and the maturation of American preeminence in the last decade of the twentieth century that produced the final ingredient necessary to consummate a fruitful bilateral partnership: the new convergence in

* Available at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Tellis.India.Global.Power.FINAL4.pdf>.

geopolitical interests, which promises that the future U.S.-Indian relationship will be quite different from its past.

There is little doubt in my mind that today and in the foreseeable future both Washington and New Delhi will be bound by common interests in a diverse set of issue-areas, including:

- Preventing Asia from being dominated by any single power that has the capacity to crowd out others and which may use aggressive assertion of national self-interest to threaten American presence, American alliances, and American ties with the regional states;
- Eliminating the threats posed by state sponsors of terrorism who may seek to use violence against innocents to attain various political objectives, and more generally neutralizing the dangers posed by terrorism and religious extremism to free societies;
- Arresting the further spread of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies to other countries and sub-national entities, including sub-state actors operating independently or in collusion with states;
- Promoting the spread of democracy not only as an end in itself but also as a strategic means of preventing illiberal polities from exporting their internal struggles over power abroad;
- Advancing the diffusion of economic development with the intent of spreading peace through prosperity through the expansion of a liberal international economic order that increases trade in goods, services, and technology worldwide;
- Protecting the global commons, especially the sea lanes of communications, through which flow not only goods and services critical to the global economy but also undesirable commerce such as drug trading, human smuggling, and weapons of mass destruction technologies;
- Preserving energy security by enabling stable access to existing energy sources through efficient and transparent market mechanisms (both internationally and domestically), while collaborating to develop new sources of energy through innovative approaches that exploit science and technology; and
- Safeguarding the global environment by promoting the creation and use of innovative technology to achieve sustainable development, devising permanent, self-sustaining, market-based institutions and systems that improve environmental protection, developing coordinated strategies for managing climate change, and assisting in the event of natural disasters.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that for the first time in recent memory Indian and American interests in each of these eight issue-areas are strongly convergent. It is equally true to assert that India's contribution ranges from important to indispensable as far as achieving U.S. objectives in each of these issue-areas is concerned. That does not mean, however, that the United States and India will *automatically* collaborate on every problem that comes before our two countries. The differentials in raw power between the two sides are still too great and could produce differences in operational objectives, even when the overarching interests are preeminently compatible. Beyond differentials in power, bilateral collaboration could still be stymied by competing national preferences over the strategies used to realize certain objectives. And, finally, even when disagreement over strategies is not at issue, differences in negotiating styles and tactics may sometimes divide the two sides.

What does it mean then to say that U.S.-Indian interests are strongly convergent, if bilateral collaboration cannot always be assumed to ensue automatically? It means two things: first, that the United and India share a common vision of which end-states are desirable and what outcomes ought to be pursued—however this is done—by both sides; and, second, that there are no differences in vital interests that would cause either party to levy mortal threats against the other or would cause either country to undercut the other's core objectives on any issue of strategic importance. It is these two realities—informed by the convergence in interests, values, and inter-societal ties—that provide the basis for strong practical cooperation between the United States and India, realities that do not define U.S. bilateral relations with the other major, continental-sized, states in Asia.

Several practical implications, which ought to be of significance to the Congress as it ponders the U.S.-Indian civilian nuclear agreement, flow from these realities. To begin with, the strengthening U.S.-Indian relationship does not imply that New Delhi will become a formal alliance partner of Washington at some point in the future. It also does not imply that India will invariably be an uncritical partner of the United States in its global endeavors. India's large size, its proud history, and its great ambitions, ensure that it will likely march to the beat of its own drummer, at least most of the time. The first question, for the Congress in particular and for the United States more generally, therefore, ought not to be, "What will India do for us?"—as critics of the civilian nuclear agreement often assert. Rather, the real question ought to be, "Is a strong, democratic, (even if perpetually) independent, India in American national interest?" If, as I believe, this is the fundamental question and if, as I further believe, the answer to this question is "Yes," then the real discussion about the evolution of the U.S.-Indian relationship ought to focus on how the United States can assist the growth of Indian power, and how it can do so at minimal cost (if that is relevant) to any other competing national security objectives.

If I am permitted to digress a bit, let me say parenthetically, that advancing the growth of Indian power, as the Administration currently intends, is not directed, as many critics have alleged, at "containing" China. I do not believe that a policy of containing China is either feasible or necessary at this point in time. (India too, currently, has no interest in becoming part of any coalition aimed at containing China.) Rather, the Administration's

strategy of assisting India to become a major world power in the twenty-first century is directed, first and foremost, towards constructing a stable geopolitical order in Asia that is conducive to peace and prosperity. There is little doubt today that the Asian continent is poised to become the new center of gravity in international politics. Although lower growth in the labor force, reduced export performance, diminishing returns to capital, changes in demographic structure, and the maturation of the economy all suggest that national growth rates in several key Asian states—in particular Japan, South Korea, and possibly China—are likely to decline in comparison to the latter half of the Cold War period, the spurt in Indian growth rates, coupled with the relatively high though still marginally declining growth rates in China, will propel Asia's share of the global economy to some 43% by 2025, thus making the continent the largest single locus of economic power worldwide.

An Asia that hosts economic power of such magnitude, along with its strong and growing connectivity to the American economy, will become an arena vital to the United States—in much the same way that Europe was the grand prize during the Cold War. In such circumstances, the Administration's policy of developing a new global partnership with India represents a considered effort at "shaping" the emerging Asian environment to suit American interests in the twenty-first century. Even as the United States focuses on developing good relations with *all* the major Asian states, it is eminently reasonable for Washington not only to invest additional resources in strengthening the continent's democratic powers but also to deepen the bilateral relationship enjoyed with each of these countries—on the assumption that the proliferation of strong democratic states in Asia represents the best insurance against intra-continental instability as well as threats that may emerge against the United States and its regional presence. Strengthening New Delhi and transforming U.S.-Indian ties, therefore, has everything to do with American confidence in Indian democracy and the conviction that its growing strength, tempered by its liberal values, brings only benefits for Asian stability and American security. As Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns succinctly stated in his testimony before this Committee, "By cooperating with India now, we accelerate the arrival of the benefits that India's rise brings to the region and the world."

In this context, I appreciate that important as it is to strengthen India in America's own self-interest, the question will often be asked about whether (and how) India will collaborate in endeavors critical to the United States. The good news about India's obsession with its national autonomy is that while it does not *a priori* guarantee New Delhi's support for Washington in regards to any specific operational objective, strategy or tactic (even when the larger interests are otherwise identical), *it does not preclude such assistance either*. In fact, during the last five years, India has built up an impressive record of backing the United States in a wide variety of issue-areas, despite its formal and continuing commitment to "non-alignment" as a foreign policy doctrine. The list of Indian initiatives in support of the United States is a lengthy one—many specific activities are in fact still classified—but the following iteration is offered by way of highlighting the reality and the possibilities of U.S.-Indian strategic collaboration.

Since 2001, India:

- Enthusiastically endorsed the President's new strategic framework, despite decades of objections to U.S. nuclear policies, at a time when even formal American allies withheld their support;
- Offered unqualified support for the U.S. anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan to include the use of numerous Indian military bases, an offer that was never made even to the Soviet Union which functioned as New Delhi's patron during the last decades of the Cold War;
- Expressed no opposition whatsoever to the President's decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, despite the widespread international and domestic condemnation of the U.S. action;
- Endorsed the U.S. position on environmental protection and global climate change in the face of strident global opposition;
- Assisted the U.S. initiative to remove Jose Mauricio Bustani, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons despite strong third-world opposition in the United Nations;
- Protected high-value U.S. cargoes transiting the Straits of Malacca during the critical early phase of the global war on terror, despite the absence of New Delhi's traditional requirement of a covering UN mandate;
- Eschewed leading or joining the international chorus of opposition to the U.S.-led coalition campaign against Iraq, despite repeated entreaties from other major powers and third-world states to that effect;
- Considered seriously—and came close to providing—an Indian Army division for post-war stabilization operations in Iraq, despite widespread national opposition to the U.S.-led war;
- Signed a ten-year defense cooperation framework agreement with the United States that identifies common strategic goals and the means for achieving them, despite strong domestic opposition to, and regional suspicion about, such forms of collaboration with Washington; and
- Voted with the United States at the September 2005 IAEA Board of Governors meeting to declare Iran in "non-compliance" with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite strong domestic opposition and international surprise.

These examples, viewed in their totality, illustrate several important aspects of U.S.-Indian strategic collaboration. First, despite the absence of preexisting guarantees, bilateral cooperation between Washington and New Delhi is eminently possible on many issues vital to the United States. Second, from the perspective of American interests, what New Delhi does in some instances may be just as important as what it refrains from doing. Third, in every instance where the United States and India have been able to collaborate during the last five years, the most important ingredients that contributed to achieving a fruitful outcome were the boldness of leadership, the astuteness of policy, and the quality of diplomacy—both American and Indian. As we look at the three most pressing challenges likely to dominate our common attention in the first half of this new century—the rise of China amidst Asian resurgence in general, the threat of the continuing spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the dangers posed by terrorism and religious extremism to liberal societies—two assertions become almost self-evidently true: Not only are the United States and India more intensely affected by these three

challenges in comparison to many other states in Europe and Asia, but effective diplomacy, wise policy, and bold leadership will also make the greatest difference to achieving the desired “strategic coordination” between Washington and New Delhi that serves American interests just as well as any recognized alliance.

Since the character of our policy, leadership, and diplomacy will be critical to making such U.S.-Indian collaboration—whether tacit or explicit—possible, both the Administration and the Congress will have to partner in this regard. The most important contribution that the legislative branch can make here is by helping to change India’s entitative status from that of a target under U.S. non-proliferation laws to that of a full partner. The Administration’s civilian nuclear agreement with India is directed fundamentally towards this objective. To be sure, it will produce important and tangible non-proliferation gains for the United States—an argument I have elaborated in Attachment A to this testimony—just as it will bestow energy and environmental benefits on India. But, at a grand strategic level, it is intended to do much more: given the lessons learned from over fifty years of alternating engagement and opposition, the civil nuclear cooperation agreement is intended to convey in one fell swoop the abiding American interest in crafting a full and productive partnership with India to advance our common goals in this new century. As Undersecretary of State Burns phrased it in his recent testimony, “our ongoing diplomatic efforts to conclude a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement are not simply exercises in bargaining and tough-minded negotiation; they represent a broad confidence-building effort grounded in a political commitment from the highest levels of our two governments.”

Many administrations before that of George W. Bush also sought this same objective, but they were invariably hobbled by the constraints of U.S. nonproliferation laws that treated India as a problem to be contained rather than as a partner to be engaged. Not surprisingly, these efforts, though admirable, always came to naught for the simple reason that it was impossible to craft a policy that simultaneously transformed New Delhi into a strategic partner on the one hand, even as it was permanently anchored as the principal nonproliferation target on the other. These prior American efforts, however, served an important purpose: they taught us that trying to transform the bilateral relationship with India would always be frustrated if it was not accompanied by a willingness to reexamine the fundamentals on which this relationship was based.

To its credit, the Bush Administration has learned the right lessons in this regard. Recognizing that a new global partnership would require engaging New Delhi not only on issues important to the United States, the Administration has moved rapidly to expand bilateral collaboration on a wide range of subjects, including those of greatest importance to India. The agreement relating to civilian nuclear cooperation is, thus, part of a larger set of initiatives involving space, dual-use high technology, advanced military equipment, and missile defense. Irrespective of the technologies involved in each of these realms, the Administration has approached the issues implicated in their potential release to New Delhi through an entirely new prism. In contrast to the past, the President sees India as part of the solution to proliferation rather than as part of the problem. He views the growth of Indian power as beneficial to the United States and its geopolitical interests in

Asia and, hence, worthy of strong American support. And, he is convinced that the success of Indian democracy, the common interests shared with the United States, and the human ties that bind our two societies together, offer a sufficiently lasting assurance of New Delhi's responsible behavior so as to justify the burdens of requesting Congress to amend the relevant U.S. laws (and the international community, the relevant regimes).

In reaching this conclusion, the Administration has—admirably—resisted the temptation of “pocketing” India's good nonproliferation record and its recent history of cooperation with the United States, much to the chagrin of many commentators who have argued that New Delhi ought not to be rewarded for doing what it would do anyway in its own national interest. On this question too, the President's inclinations are correct: Given India's importance to the United States in regard to each of the eight issue-areas identified earlier in this testimony, reaching out to New Delhi with the promise of a full partnership is a much better strategy for transforming U.S.-India relations than the niggardly calculation of treating Indian good behavior as a freebie that deserves no compensation because New Delhi presumably would not have conducted itself differently in any case. On all these issues, I believe the President has made the right judgment with respect to India and its importance to the United States. I hope the Congress will agree.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your attention and consideration.

YALE GLOBAL ONLINE

When US President Bush signed a deal in July with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh allowing India access to civilian nuclear technology, naysayers complained that the administration had undermined the principles of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which India has not signed. In the part two of our series, Ashley J. Tellis argues that, such critics fail to see the shrewdness of rewarding India's record of voluntary non-proliferation with urgently needed civilian nuclear programs, while placing India's future nuclear development within an international framework. By ensuring that India's nuclear program enjoys the same benefits and is bound by the same obligations as the other powers in the non-proliferation regime, the US is invoking one of its top national security priorities: the prevention of nuclear commerce between India and a rogue state or non-state actor. Critics point out that other NPT non-signatories, like Pakistan or North Korea, will demand the same recognition and benefits for their nuclear programs that the deal has provided India. Tellis argues that such fears are groundless, since India, a democratic and rapidly developing nuclear power with a good non-proliferation track record outside the NPT, is almost universally acknowledged to be an exception, not the rule. Ultimately, Tellis calls for a global consensus supporting the Bush-Singh agreement, and encourages the critics, within the US Congress itself, to recognize the American national security benefits of bringing India into the recognized nuclear fold. – YaleGlobal

Should the US Sell Nuclear Technology to India? – Part II

The sale would serve both the countries' national security interest as well as the goal of non-proliferation

Ashley J. Tellis
YaleGlobal, 10 November 2005

WASHINGTON: The Indo-US bilateral agreement providing New Delhi access to the long-denied civilian nuclear technology has emerged as a contentious issue in the Congress. But it need not be because the deal is good for both countries' national security interests as well as for preventing nuclear proliferation.

The July 18, 2005 agreement, many critics assert would undermine the global nonproliferation regime and ultimately American security. At the first hearing on this subject on September 8, 2005, Congressman Henry J. Hyde correctly noted that among the critical questions surrounding this agreement was whether its "net impact on our nonproliferation policy is positive or negative." On October 26, 2005, at the second hearing on this issue, four out of the five witnesses empanelled by the House Committee on International Relations affirmed the conventional wisdom that such a deal weakens nonproliferation rather than strengthening it.

Contrary to these gloomy prognostications, the President's new agreement with India is actually a bold step that will have the effect of strengthening the nonproliferation order for many decades to come. Far from being a freebie for New Delhi, it represents a considered American strategy for integrating India into the nonproliferation regime, which India has not been part of since the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed in 1968. The



Bonding in the air: Indian and US Air Force personnel exchange tips during a joint air exercise held in India. (U.S. Air Force photo)

NPT was intended to prevent global proliferation by compelling all non-nuclear weapon states to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions as the price for enjoying access to civilian nuclear technology. This trade-off worked for most countries and represents a profound diplomatic accomplishment for which succeeding Republican and Democratic administrations should be credited. For a variety of political and philosophical reasons, however, India chose not to sign the NPT and went on to build both a large civilian nuclear infrastructure and a nuclear weapons stockpile based mainly on indigenous expertise. Thus, the restrictions on nuclear commerce that the United States orchestrated since 1974 progressively lost their relevance as far as India was concerned. In effect, India became an exceptional case regarding nuclear weapons and nonproliferation.

Far from being a freebie for New Delhi, it represents a considered American strategy for integrating India into the nonproliferation regime.

Nevertheless, New Delhi established through this entire period an exemplary record of controlling onward proliferation. . India's commendable nonproliferation history, however, is owed entirely to sovereign decisions made by its government, not to its adherence to international agreements. As a result, any unilateral change in the Indian government's policy of strict nonproliferation could pose serious problems for American security. This concern has acquired particular urgency in the post-9/11 era because of the incredibly sophisticated capabilities present in India today and because India remains at the cutting edge of research and development activities in new fuel cycle technologies. Bringing New Delhi into the global nonproliferation regime through a lasting bilateral agreement that defines clearly enforceable benefits and obligations, therefore, not only strengthens American efforts to stem further proliferation but also enhances U.S. national security.

The President's accord with India advances these objectives in a fair and direct way. It recognizes that it is unreasonable to continue to ask India to bear the burdens of enforcing the global nonproliferation regime in perpetuity, while it suffers stiff and encompassing sanctions from that same regime. So the President proposes to give India access to nuclear fuel, technology, and knowledge in exchange for New Delhi institutionalizing rigorous export controls, placing its civilian reactors under international safeguards, and actively assisting the United States in reducing proliferation worldwide. In other words, he offers India the benefits of peaceful nuclear cooperation in exchange for transforming what is currently a unilateral Indian commitment to nonproliferation into a formally verifiable and permanent international responsibility.

Agreement that defines clearly enforceable benefits and obligations not only strengthens nonproliferation but also enhances U.S. national security.

This deal, obviously, does not imply a lessened U.S. commitment to maintain through intense diplomacy in the months and years ahead the vitality of the NPT regime, which remains critical to American national interests. But, it does indicate that extraordinary problems justify extraordinary solutions. The international community has long recognized India's anomalous position in the NPT framework. Consequently, three out of the five legitimate nuclear weapon states have welcomed the Bush-Singh agreement and even the exception thus far—China—has been silent rather than opposed. Despite this fact, many fear that the agreement could undercut the basic bargain of the NPT and lead several current non-nuclear weapon states to seek those same benefits now offered to India.

This concern must be taken seriously, but it is on balance exaggerated. For starters, there is no international pressure to re-negotiate the NPT from either its nuclear or its non-nuclear signatories. Further, those non-nuclear weapon states that joined the regime and continue to remain members in good standing did so because the treaty emphatically serves their national interests. If anything, these countries should join IAEA Director-General Mohammed El Baradei in applauding the Bush-Singh initiative, because an India that undertakes binding international nonproliferation obligations promotes the security of non-nuclear weapons states as much as it does that of the United States. Not surprisingly, then, many non-nuclear weapon states such as Canada and Australia have endorsed the agreement.

Three out of the five nuclear weapon states have welcomed the Bush-Singh agreement and even China has been silent rather than opposed.

Finally, with regard to worries about other NPT non-signatories demanding similar deals to the one that Bush and Singh have just brokered, it is worth noting that India currently remains the only outlier worthy of such unique treatment. Although India, Pakistan, and Israel have not violated any NPT obligations by developing their nuclear deterrents, New Delhi alone meets the following criteria that justify international cooperation: It has proven mastery over various nuclear fuel cycles, which must now be safeguarded in the global interest. It has an exceptional nonproliferation record, despite having been a target of the international nonproliferation regime. Most importantly, it has enormous energy needs that cannot be satisfied without access to nuclear fuel (and to nuclear power more generally), if it is simultaneously expected to help mitigate the problems of climate change and environmental degradation.

Two other arguments often surface in the debate over proposed U.S.-Indian nuclear cooperation. The first is that it would exacerbate the problems posed by Iran and North Korea. This claim must be decisively rejected since the only thing common to these three cases is the word "nuclear," nothing more. Iran and North Korea violated their NPT obligations; India did not. This simple fact ensures that

whatever the issues relating to accommodating New Delhi may be, they ought not to be mixed up with those of managing regimes that have consistently cheated on their international obligations and then repeatedly lied about it. The second argument contends that the U.S.-Indian agreement will open the door to other nuclear suppliers engaging in reckless transfers of nuclear technology to their own preferred partners. This is possible, but it is not inevitable. A great deal depends on whether the international community will join the United States in viewing India as the only country worthy of special treatment. At present, an emerging agreement on this issue is in the works and the prospects for a consensus are bright because India is a democratic state, has not violated international agreements, and has exhibited responsible custodianship of its nuclear assets. In any event, the administration is committed to working with its international partners to reach closure on this issue and, hence, it ought not to be assumed that the understanding with New Delhi will automatically open doors to other nuclear suppliers engaging in emulative arrangements.

India ought not to be mixed up with those regimes that have consistently cheated on their international obligations and then repeatedly lied about it.

On balance, there are many reasons why Congress should expeditiously support the President's historic civil nuclear agreement with India. It would be unfortunate if the legislative branch overlooked the fact that strengthening the global nonproliferation regime is clearly one of them.

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